DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 097 607 CG 009 296

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TITLE Personality Integration and Successful Outcome in Individual Psychotherapy.
PUB DATE May 74
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Psychological Association (Chicago, Illinois, May 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Counseling Effectiveness; *Helping Relationship; Individual Psychology; *Personality Studies; *Psychotherapy; Research Projects; *Sex Differences; Speeches
IDENTIFIERS *Tennessee SELF Concept Scale

ABSTRACT

Successful and unsuccessful outcomes in 24 therapy dyads were analyzed according to client-therapist personality integration (pi). Results indicated that successful outcome was most likely to occur when both client and therapist were high pi. Failure was most frequent among mixed sex dyads with discrepant pi differences. Implications for effective client-therapist matching were discussed. (Author)

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PERSONALITY INTEGRATION AND SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME IN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY[1]

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Previous studies have suggested that patient-therapist similarity is significantly related to outcome success. Many such investigations have examined sex, age, race and other demographic variables while psychological variables have less frequently been the subject of empirical evaluation. The present study was one in which both therapists and clients were studied along a broad gauge psychological dimension referred to as personality integration. Personality integration overlaps with constructs such as congruence, self-actualization, and high levels of ego identity status. The work of Seeman and his colleagues (Seeman, 1959; 1966; Seeman, Barry and Ellinwood, 1963; Thomas and Seeman, 1970; 1972) indicates that individuals high in personality integration: 1) have high environment contact; 2) have positive self concept; 3) are stable in mood; 4) are relatively well organized; 5) relate well to others affectively; 6) have internal locus of evaluation and control; 7) are seen by others as high in empathy, congruence, and acceptance of others; and 8) are cognitively complex.

> "What cognitive and perceptual behaviors do we hypothesize to be relevant in characterizing individuals high in personality integration? We draw on theory and research to construct a portrait of the effectively functioning person. The overriding concept which describes such a person is that he is in touch with himself and with his world. He has open communication channels with himself and high contact with his environment. The integrated person may be described as having an effective network of internal communication. One function of this communication network is to provide information on which to act." (Thomas and Seeman, 1971, pp. 26-27.)

Insofar as previous research has not addressed itself to the specific question of how patient and therapist's personality integration status affects therapy outcome, for purposes of the present investigation the null hypothesis was expected to prevail; that is, no differences in outcome were expected to emerge based upon therapist-client similarity according to level of personality integration.

METHOD

The study was conducted at a large multiuniversity psychological and counseling center serving an academic community. Therapist S's were eight graduate student counselors selected for inclusion in the present investigation according to a stratified random sampling procedure: one male and one female therapist under the supervision of each of four clinical psychologist staff supervisors (N = 8; mean age of therapist trainees 26.1). Three clients (i.e., two same sex and one opposite sex) for each therapist constituted the client sample (N = 24 dyads; 12 male and 12 female clients); the mean age of clients was 22.4 years.

At the start of the academic year each therapist completed the Tennessee Self Concept Scale which includes a 25-item personality integration scale, and the 18-item Marcia Ego Identity Status Incomplete Sentences blank which has been normed on college subjects and has an objective scoring system which yields scores ranging from 18-54. Clients completed the same measures as part of their intake procedure. The Tennessee Self Concept Scale consists of 100 self-descriptive statements to which the subject responds on a five-point scale from completely true to completely false. The subscales yield an overall profile of self concept for both clinical and research purposes. The development of

the personality integration scale was based upon normative data gathered with 75 subjects and is intended to be a measure of personality strength with items focusing upon one's psychological assets and resources. The two scales were used as convergent dependent measures for the construct personality integration. Two categories of therapy outcome were designated: a) unsuccessful (which included unexpected or premature termination, and b) successful (full term mutually agreed upon termination). Outcome categorization was determined both by the therapist and supervisor who completed a closing summary sheet in tandem which is a customary procedure at the Center.

RESULTS

A series of t-tests indicated that in dyads where both therapist and patient were high in personality integration, therapy was more likely to be successful with termination mutually agreed upon ($t = 3.04$; $df = 22$; $p < .01$) than other types of therapy dyads. Though no consistent sex differences emerged, it was found that the more discrepant personality integration differences in mixed sex dyads, the more likely outcome would be unsuccessful ($F = 5.21$; $p < .01$) and termination premature ($F = 4.74$; $p < .01$). These findings received further corroboration in the data for mean number of sessions: mean number of sessions for successful therapy outcome 16.2 sessions (standard deviation = 3.28) and 7.5 sessions (standard deviation = 2.16) for unsuccessful therapy outcome.

The results indicate that personality integration is a variable which should be considered in effectively matching clients and therapists to create optimum conditions for success in individual psychotherapy. Both perceived and actual psychological similarity may be important in deter-

mining client level of commitment to completing psychotherapy. Findings here are consistent with earlier studies associating successful outcome with client-therapist similarity (Rosenthal, 1955) and also suggest that marked client-therapist dissimilarity in level of personality integration may lead to premature termination, especially in mixed sex dyads. This study further strengthens the arguments for systematic matching of clients and therapists for reducing the likelihood of wasteful, counterproductive prematurely terminated psychotherapy relationships. The facility at which this study was conducted as a result of these and other similar findings, now seriously considers client preferences for sex of therapist prior to assignment of therapist.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]A slightly modified version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association in Chicago, May, 1974. The data upon which this study is based were collected with the cooperation of the staff and trainees of the Peabody-Vanderbilt-Scarritt Interuniversity Psychological and Counseling Center. Assistance rendered by Kay Wildman for managing the preparation of this paper is greatly appreciated.

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